

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

April 6, 2004

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Osborne.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Roy, Gatsas, Guinta, Sysyn, Osborne, Porter, O’Neil, Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith and Forest

Absent: Alderman Thibault

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

John St. Hilaire, 99 Murphy Street, Manchester stated:

I am here to speak to you tonight on public access. Public access television or actually on what public access television really is and why it is important that it sticks around. First of all, MCTV is not public access. MCTV is a part of PEG access, which stands for Public Education and Government television. It is comprised of three stations. One station for each of the three dominions – public, education and government. Back in October the School Board voted unanimously to separate public access from the education department. The Mayor then proceeded to put together recommendations to put together a board for a non-profit organization that would oversee public access and the removal of public access and the change over to get it away from the educational department. It would be a huge plus for public access to be split off from public education, not to mention the simple fact of the liabilities that would all of the sudden disappear if public access disappeared from the school’s role. The opportunities that would be available for education and government for the students when the studios become available to them after school hours, which they are

not available currently because they are used for public access and for producing shows. Public access was asked to present a budget and did so. The budget was for \$191,000 to be funded. It was cut to \$120,000. The Board of Directors looked at it and are looking at it. Tonight is an informational meeting. It is to let you know what public access is, that the public access is a group of volunteers that were put together and that our goal is to take public access into a non-profit status away from the City to eliminate the liability that you currently have with what is going on with public access. With that, I will end my two minutes and I will see you again shortly with a full presentation to continue on with the benefits and the plusses.

R. J. Norton, 21 South Elm Street, Manchester stated:

I have a show called “Early America” on public access TV and on July 4 I read the Declaration of Independence right outside this wonderful building. Can I just ask everyone for their support for public access TV. Back in the 1980’s I used to drive down to Medford, MA. We didn’t have a public access TV station down there. They went through the same process. They were in the school and they split off in the same way and it was a contentious but successful endeavor and now they have their own studio there. Public access TV...the reason why the cable companies pay the money to support it is because they give a voice to the isolated people who are out there who will never be on television. The educational channel and the government channel are wonderful and they should be supported but you folks get good press. You say one little thing about the baseball field or anything and it is all over the newspapers and you say wait a minute I just made one little comment but anyway and the School Board they get that attention and publicity but the isolated folks out there who want to say what they should be saying and contribute to the City don’t have that opportunity so the cable companies got together and came up with public access. I would just ask you folks to support public access. I have done over 400 history shows since I have been here and I hope to do a lot more. I thank you very much for your time.

Jaye Yanouch, 263 Spruce Street, Manchester stated:

I would like to raise a couple of questions concerning the Mayor’s proposed tax increase. I am a little concerned personally. I have been a resident of Manchester since November 2003. Last year I had a property tax increase of 4%. With a proposed increase of 8% according to an editorial by *The Union Leader* recently we are talking about a 15% tax hike that City residents have had to endure since the Mayor took office. I am just a little concerned as to why more cuts aren’t being considered and the effects that the baseball stadium and the Verizon Wireless Arena have had on our increases and not only if the taxes increase but where specifically are those services going to be going to help me and my fellow residents.

Jeff Kassel, 22 Appleton Street, Manchester stated:

I noticed today that Harvey Construction is threatening to sue...I haven’t come here in five or six months to complain about the baseball stadium and that whole project so I am

registering my complaint once again here today. Actually I had an experience yesterday. My old car that I drive around in, a 1988 Mercury Tracer, stopped on Maple Street. I suspect that it was the generator. It is an old car. I had it towed in and my regular mechanic told me he was going to rebuild the generator for me for \$189. That seemed like a little too much to me so I kind of called around after I left his place and it turns out the going price for these rebuilt generators is about \$80 or \$90. It was a rip-off. Well I think a lot of people are used to getting ripped off by car repair people. Not all of them do it but some of them do it and it is very frustrating when it happens. You feel abused. Like the last speaker I feel a little abused by these budget increases. I pay over \$4,000 in tax. The upstairs of my house isn't even heated. I think that is kind of an average tax rate. I have been watching taxes go up for the last five years here. Sometimes 4%, sometimes 6%. There is not much respect for taxpayers and we really count on the Board of Aldermen to represent us and not represent schoolteachers and the educational and industrial complex in this City. The School budget is going up about \$13 or \$14 million and at some point somebody has to say no. There are a lot of things wrong with school curriculums but they seem to have a lock on management of this City and there is a limit to what people can afford to pay and I am one of them.

Aline Lotter, 227 Salmon Street, Manchester stated:

I am here to express some concerns about the City's continuing plans for development on Hackett Hill. A few years ago there was considerable opposition to the plans at a public hearing. Most people recognized that there was priceless ecology there that would be jeopardized by development, run off from the development and that there is priceless urban and wildlife habitats that would be destroyed by inserting developments among the preserve property and to achieve what? One possibility was burnished image for the City of Manchester but it would be better to permanently set aside the Hackett Hill as a preserve and promote it as an educational asset and even a tourist attraction. It has been suggested that it would lower property taxes but that is very much in doubt and an extensive study should be gone into before you count on that. It has been suggested that we need to recover our acquisition costs for the land but you should consider that that cost was recovered in a deal with the EPA that was required by the combined sewer overflow problem. So the bottom line is the City's policy ought to be balanced. For every major development the City undertakes like the civic center or the baseball park the City should set aside for permanent protection some important open spaces and there is nothing as important as Hackett Hill. Thank you.

Jane Beaulieu, 609 So. Main Street, Manchester stated:

I thank you for the opportunity to speak. My comments tonight pertain to current land use decisions, the process in which they are made and their long-term effects on the residents and taxpayers. These are minutes from a Planning Board meeting dated October 9, 2003. A Board member expressed concerns. He noted that there were two very important issues coming about that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is addressing right now that have dramatic impacts to the planning of the City. He added that the Planning Board gets caught

off guard and is dramatically impacted by decisions on zoning changes and he would encourage the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to insure that the Planning Board has the opportunity to review and make recommendations on zoning changes. The Board member also said that maybe people go to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen with rezoning requests because they feel it will be more quickly addressed without as much scrutiny as would happen with the Planning Board. He said hopefully the process will be changed. He added that the Wellington Road property is being sold for budgetary issues but the bidders are putting into their bids a condition that the property be rezoned. He said it is his opinion that the reason the Wellington Road property is being sold is because the City is facing extreme budget issues. By the time recommendations on the rezoning are sought by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, the bids will have already been in with the condition that it be rezoned for that price. He added that the land is worth more zoned commercial than zoned residential. He went on to say that residential zoning will provide no additional jobs and increase the demand on services. He felt that this has dramatic planning impacts and the way it is being orchestrated right now won't be considered appropriate. He added that Candia Road is a slightly different matter but with similar impacts. Several more subdivisions have been developed and continue to be developed on the East side of Manchester. Over 100 students will be entering our schools, which are currently being threatened with teacher reductions, which will cause overcrowded classes and unemployed teachers. Keeping the tax base as the number one concern facing the Mayor and Board of Mayor and Aldermen but without a Master Plan to guide your current land use decisions will increase property taxes, which is evident today. I encourage you to fund a new Master Plan immediately for Master Plans are developed to encourage and manage sustainable growth. Thank you.

John Cronin, 81 Wagner Street, Manchester stated:

Initially I would like to thank you all for your time and commitment to the City. As a long time resident I know the hours that you put in on various issues that come before the Board. Tonight I would like to speak about the rezoning that will come before the Board tonight and that is the parcel that is located at the intersection of Granite Street and Second Street. I have defined that parcel as a key component of the Granite Street gateway project. I was before the Committee a couple of weeks ago that was considering that rezoning. At that particular time Mr. MacKenzie appeared on behalf of the Planning Board and recommended that the rezoning not be done right away. He said the Planning Board had taken the position that it was premature to rezone that parcel because it could be key to future redevelopment efforts on that corridor. At that time I appeared on behalf of Red Oak Property Management, who had substantial holdings in the City and pay a substantial amount of taxes and has in excess of \$4 million in properties along the Second Street/Granite Street corridor. Red Oak has been working with Mr. MacKenzie and his staff to come up with a comprehensive redevelopment plan for that entire area. In the concept plans that were presented previously to the City, that particular parcel was shown as open space and a park. We are concerned that if the rezoning is done tonight it will have a negative impact and may thwart future efforts to really make that the central focus of the Gateway Project. Thank you again for your time.

John Latsha, 10 Gantry Street, Manchester stated:

I would like to talk about the budget. We elected you Aldermen to do a job and that job is running the City. It is an awesome responsibility, which requires one to balance will versus wallet. All of you want to do the best for our City but there has to be a line drawn in the sand at some point. When you raise taxes you begin to effect the quality of one's life. You hear a lot about the elderly deciding whether to eat or pay for their homes. Homes in which they brought up their children. Homes that have lots of memories; memories that should never ever be taken away. You hear about the single parents trying to make ends meet with one paycheck. You hear about the large families in our City worried about how they are going to pay for their oldest son or daughter to go to college. Republican Mayor Bernie Streeter of Nashua said in a newspaper article, "every city department wants more money than they had the year before and I have to say enough is enough. I have to pass a budget that meets the needs of our people that won't hurt people's pocketbooks. We have to think about taxes. The School Board has an extremely tough job putting a budget together and so do I." This is not a panic time. This is a time for reflection. I think the same bodes true for this City. It really is a time of reflection. Thank you very much.

Sharyn Kelley, 135 Ridge Road, Manchester stated:

I have an office at 68 Sagamore Street, which is Suburban Realty and I live at 135 Bridge Road in Manchester. On a monthly basis I pay over \$1,000 to the City of Manchester in taxes. I do it. Not gladly but I do it. I have been reading articles in the paper. I know that there is no definite increase set right now but I think everybody is believing that there is an increase coming. In my hands that I would like to pass over to you folks is new construction that has been built in Manchester. This does not reflect any conversions or any reassessment. It is just new construction since 2001, which represents millions of dollars, of new tax dollars coming into this City. I believe there was an article in the paper last week and one of the Assessors was quoted as saying we have to raise the taxes because we have elderly exemptions or Veteran's exemptions. These are people that deserve their exemptions. They certainly are not impacting...you can't look at the elderly and say that they shouldn't have an exemption when you have millions of dollars of new tax dollars coming into Manchester. We have had a tremendous amount of growth. I sold real estate in this City for 30 years and I want to continue but if you keep going up with your taxes people aren't going to be able to afford the houses and we are going to have a ripple effect. There is talk and I don't know if it is on the books yet, of doing a revaluation for the City of Manchester. We just did one in 2001. We are certainly not going to have to do one right now. I am sure that by 2005 or 2006 there should be something on the books to look at it but you don't do a revaluation at the height of a real estate market. It is going to raise taxes and hurt a lot of people. I would like you to consider taking a look at finding money somewhere else other than going into the pockets of the people of Manchester. Thank you.

Brian-Nathaniel Wheeler, 1020 Hanover Street, Manchester stated:

I have come to you tonight to speak about the Hot Couch Teen Art Center. I have been a member of the Advisory Board since the beginning of that place and recently the alliance of community support has overspent our funding and as of April 30 the Art Center will be closing. I feel that Manchester as a community should have a community supported drop-in center for older teens. Over the last four years that the Art Center has been opened I have seen it develop very much and it has focused a lot on school, keeping kids in school and keeping kids off of drugs and providing a safe environment. I come here tonight to see if there is any way that the community of Manchester would help out the Art Center by forming a community advisory board towards development, programming and fundraising. It costs \$198 per day tax wise for a YDC child to be put in placement. It costs about \$5 per day for a kid to attend the Art Center. That is \$72,000 for just one youth at YDC. If two teens were to resort to a life of crime and drugs it would cost \$144,000 a year for the City just to put them into social services when they could have the drop-in center, Hot Couch. My cry to this Committee is please support the teens of Manchester. Thank you.

Susan McKeown, 299 Steinmetz Drive, Manchester stated:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. Brian said it very accurately and articulately; I am here to talk about the Hot Couch also. We received a letter last week informing us that the Hot Couch was closing on April 30. There was no window with which to respond to that. It was if anybody is interested in any furniture come and pick it up. That is hardly a way to close an agency. Brian gave you the statistics and they are very accurate. I am a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in Manchester and have been for 30 years. We also are the parents of four children and two of them have suffered with substance abuse problems and the younger one is featured in the Hippo Press this week if any of you have the opportunity to pick up the publication when they went there to interview for Hot Couch. It is real and it costs a whole lot more from all of our taxpayer money to support my son when he went to the YDSU. It costs by comparison nothing to go to the Hot Couch. When one is in drug recovery, especially as an adolescent, you have to come back to the community and the critical thing about recovery is you must find a new association and you cannot go back to your former using group. The Hot Couch provides that opportunity to many youths in the City. There were 367 that were seen there last year...individuals but on a repeated basis. I believe Mayor Baines was there at the art show last year. They had their struggles when they first opened but in these last few years they have really made great strides. Let us all look at this with some pride that we don't want to let this opportunity be a failure in Manchester. I am very actively involved in prevention, both in the City and the State, previously with Makin' It Happen and New Futures. Prevention is terribly important and we need all of us to look at this and address it. Thank you very much.

Patrick McKeown, 299 Steinmetz Drive, Manchester stated:

I am a Special Needs teacher at Central High School. I have taught at Central High School for 32 years. The community of kids that I serve are mentally retarded. The children are really learning disabled or emotionally disturbed. I also help out at the Hot Couch and I have

been going down there for about a year helping out and tutoring kids after school. I am here to speak on behalf of the Hot Couch. The Director and the Co-Director there...having been around kids for as long as I have you know when people can connect with children and when you have somebody who is just an administrator and putting in their time. The two individuals that are working there really, really know how to connect with kids. The kids that are going down there are some of the disenfranchised children. The other day I was tutoring down there and I spoke to a young girl and I said come on I will get you a cup of coffee. Would you like a bagel as well? She said that would be great Mr. McKeown because I haven't eaten in two days. I said what? I said get your coat. She said I don't have a coat. These are the kind of kids that we are serving down at the Hot Couch. I took her to my house and got her a coat from our house and brought her to the soup kitchen and introduced her to the soup kitchen and got some emergency food for her. This is a kid who would have fallen through the cracks. Her parents aren't around and she is on her own and she doesn't know where to go. These are the kids that show up at the Hot Couch. These are the kids we are finding. These are the kids that need help. I don't know what level of funding is required to keep this place open but certainly...pay me now or pay me later. I think if you invest a nickel now you will save \$1 later. This is a good program and a worthwhile program and one that needs to be reevaluated, looked at and maybe restructured or whatever but certainly not discarded. Thank you very much.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Smith, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Shea it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk